



BREAKING THE NORDIC DEFENSE DEADLOCK

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**Stefan Forss
Pekka Holopainen**

February 2015

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FOREWORD

The Nordic states, just as other regions of Europe which neighbor Russia, are engaged in an urgent re-examination of their security and defense posture. Events in Ukraine in early-2014 threw into sharp focus a local lack of capability following decades of drawdowns and focus on crisis management operations instead of territorial defense. After an unpleasant awakening, countries in the region have turned their attention to the heightened security risks they face and their lack of preparedness for them.

In an era of continuing austerity, the challenge for these states is how to design a working security and defense solution in the short and medium term which is both robust enough to survive in isolation, but also capable of being merged into a bigger framework such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) when the time is ripe. This would serve not just local, but also U.S. interests in safeguarding local allies and partners while limiting the need for permanent presence in the region. Deeper defense cooperation between the Nordic countries is an essential part of this solution.

This monograph, by two highly experienced Finnish defense researchers with unparalleled expertise in assessing the problems posed by Russia as a neighbor, evaluates the options open to the Nordic region. It reviews both the opportunities available for regional cooperation (as well as ones from the past which have been missed), and the scope for enhanced engagement with the United States both within the framework of NATO and beyond.

As such, it provides a valuable assessment from a local perspective of how regional security challenges

can best be addressed, and an important review of opportunities for the United States to increase the effectiveness of defense cooperation with Northern Europe. It makes an important contribution to our understanding of the possibilities and constraints of Nordic defense, and is highly recommended to planners and policymakers working on European and NATO problem sets.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Douglas C. Lovelace, Jr." in a cursive script.

DOUGLAS C. LOVELACE, JR.
Director
Strategic Studies Institute and
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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

STEFAN FORSS is a senior scientist and highly experienced defense researcher. Professor Forss joined the Finnish Technical Research Centre (VTT), where he eventually became Chief Scientist. In 2005, he moved to the Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs Policy and Research Unit, attached to the National Defence University, where he advised on arms control and the security policy implications of new weapons and weapon systems. After retirement from government service in 2012, he has continued to publish on defense and security topics, including a series of high-profile reports on the implications for the Nordic States of a newly resurgent Russia. His title of Professor was awarded by the President of Finland in May 2014 in recognition of a distinguished career spanning 4 decades. Professor Forss holds a Ph.D. in physics from Helsinki University.

PEKKA HOLOPAINEN served with the Uusimaa Jaeger (Light Mechanised Infantry) Battalion. In 1997, he took command of the Infantry Battalion in the Karelia Brigade, and 1 year later was appointed Chief of Staff of the brigade. He returned to Helsinki in 2001 and became Director of the Department of Education in the National Defence College. After a series of staff posts, he was nominated Director of the Department of Strategic and Defence Studies, Finnish National Defence University. Colonel (Ret.) Holopainen's overseas assignments included Chief J9 at the HQ Kosovo Force, Chief of the Force Capability Unit, European Union Military Staff, and Deputy Chief Military Observer and the Deputy Head of Mission in the United Nation's Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan. Colonel Holopainen graduated from the Military

Academy (The Finnish Cadet School), completed the General Staff Officer Course at the U.S. Army War College, National Defense Course, and the Senior Command Course, National Defense College. He holds an MA in defence and security analysis from Lancaster University, UK, and an M.Sc. in social science (recent political history) from Helsinki University. His awards include Commander of the Order of the Lion of Finland, Freedom Cross 2nd Class, and the Medal of Military Merit as well as Commander of the Order of the Eagle of Estonia.

SUMMARY

Events in Ukraine in early-2014 have prompted a re-evaluation of national defense capabilities across Europe. In the case of the Nordic states (Sweden, Finland, Norway, Denmark, and Iceland), this renewed attention has highlighted the lack of military resources to fulfill nationally stated defense tasks. Two decades of underinvestment in defense, force reductions, and focus on expeditionary crisis management in support of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), have combined to hollow out the once fundamental principles of territorial defense. Northern Europe has been left dangerously exposed to military coercion in a time of greatly increased uncertainty.

As NATO member states, Norway and Denmark are better off than nonaligned Finland and Sweden, but common to all of them is the perception that security cannot be managed alone but has to be developed in cooperation with each other. During 2014, profoundly negative developments in Ukraine, mixed and disappointing signals from the NATO Summit in Wales, and the question marks left by the result of the Swedish parliamentary elections all combined to reinforce the stalemate in domestic politics over Swedish or Finnish membership in NATO. In this context, there is little that the United States can do to “help solve the problem,” since it is, in fact, self-inflicted in both countries. Attempts to influence public opinion in Finland or Sweden directly would, however well-intended, be counterproductive.

The Nordic countries, apart from their different security political solutions to date, have one thing in common. They all depend on the United States for their critical national defense. Strengthening these bilateral

ties, as well as building on them within the framework of the *Nordic Security Dialogue* launched at the meeting between President Barack Obama and Nordic heads of state in Stockholm, Sweden, in September 2013, hold the potential to be fundamental building blocks for a new security assurance in the region. Conversely, meeting the Nordic and Baltic security challenges without the support of the United States is doomed to failure, and the entire region would be left vulnerable and exposed to extortion and external threat.

There is significant scope for defense cooperation with and between the Nordic states, which have been notably less resistant to defense burden sharing than several established NATO allies in Western Europe. In particular, enhanced cooperation with the United States by Finland and Sweden, backed up by U.S. security guarantees in whatever form they may take, has the potential to lessen the current isolation and exposure of the Baltic States to intimidation by Russia. Based on both historical and current analysis of the problem, the authors propose that cooperation among the Nordic states (to the point of complete interoperability) and with the United States is essential.

BREAKING THE NORDIC DEFENSE DEADLOCK

INTRODUCTION

Events in Crimea and Eastern Ukraine in early-2014 provided a sudden demonstration of Europe's vulnerability to new Russian capabilities and old Russian intentions. This prompted a re-examination of security policy throughout Russia's western neighbors. In the case of the Nordic states (Finland, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, and Iceland), it highlighted the extent to which over 2 decades of spending cuts and increased focus on crisis management instead of territorial defense had hollowed out defense capabilities, leaving both North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and non-NATO countries in the region dangerously exposed. In recent years, this has applied even to Finland, which previously had maintained a more conservative defense posture by comparison with its western neighbors.

But even if there were the political will and economic potential to re-invest in credible defensive deterrence, this would be a long process. In the meantime, in a time of increasing tension, as well as declining military strength and capabilities among friends and allies, the need is evident for states in the region to cooperate constructively with each other for mutual support, and with allies beyond the region too. All Nordic countries need each other and the United States for their security. Meanwhile, the United States needs friends and allies in the area if it wishes to secure peace, stability, and its own interests in the Nordic, Baltic, and especially Arctic regions.

As the deterrent and war-preventing value of the Nordic defense forces is increasingly challenged,

building common capabilities should no longer be on hold, but should be pursued vigorously despite national political obstacles. Bearing in mind the need to synchronize Nordic defense, waiting for all Nordic countries to join NATO is not an option. Unless some extremely dramatic turn for the worse happens in the Nordic neighborhood, the wait will probably be too long. In the meantime, the national defense capabilities of Finland and Sweden are likely to deteriorate further.

This monograph therefore explores the scope, potential, and benefits of closer defense cooperation between the Nordic states themselves and with the United States. The current state of cooperation is reviewed, together with the regional and national factors that hold it back; and the value of specific joint initiatives is considered. Particular strengths and weaknesses of each of the region's militaries are highlighted, to give context to proposed defense synergies. This leads to a particularly close examination of the case of Finland, as the state with both the greatest exposure to Russia as a result of its long land border and (not coincidentally) the greatest emphasis on self-defense in its security policy. Finally, a range of policy recommendations is provided for U.S. decisionmakers considering the prospects for closer Nordic defense ties, and the role of the United States in European security overall.

HISTORY AND CONTEXT

The potential for deeper security cooperation both between the Nordic states and beyond the region with the United States and NATO naturally depends on domestic political attitudes in each country. These in turn are heavily influenced not only by constitutional

factors and contemporary political concerns, but also by each country's historical experience during the 20th century, which led each Nordic state to its own distinct solution for ensuring its security. This section therefore briefly considers the formative experiences of Nordic countries, in order to provide context for the present state of security cooperation and also to explain some of its limitations.

For Europe, ghosts from the past came alive in early-2014, as senior Russian figures praised the early achievements of fascist Germany, but at the same time portrayed the democratically elected new president of Ukraine and his administration as Nazis.¹ Traumatic memories from World War II have been stirred in Poland, the Baltic States, and the Nordic countries, too. Although acute and grave security concerns are not yet universal, war, so unthinkable just a while ago, now has to be taken into account.

The experience of the Nordic countries during World War II shaped their subsequent defense policies. The Finnish performance in the Winter War 1939-40 is well-known, but less so is the closing months in the summer of 1944 of the "Continuation War" between the Soviet Union and Finland.² The strategic assault of the Red Army was anticipated, but when it started on the Karelian Isthmus on June 9, the overwhelming size of the force deployed and its crushing firepower caught the Finnish High Command by surprise. The Finnish Army, dispirited at first, was forced to retreat but gradually recovered. The Russian onslaught, aiming at defeating the Finnish Army rapidly in a couple of weeks, slowed down and was repulsed altogether after a month of ferocious fighting. When an armistice came into force in early September 1944, the front line was entirely outside the present Finnish-Russian

border. This was the only one of the Soviet strategic assault operations that failed, a remarkable defensive achievement by a small army against a superpower. Finland's freedom and independence were saved. Later on, a number of very distinguished Finnish military officers emigrated to the United States and enlisted in the U.S. Army, bringing with them extraordinary expertise on Finnish combat tactics, winter warfare, and offensive and defensive warfare in rugged forest terrain.³

Sweden was one of the few European countries that managed to stay out of World War II. In 1939, the readiness of the Swedish Defense Forces was remarkably low, as the decision taken in 1925 to embark upon successive disarmament was still felt. War weariness in the aftermath of the Great War, the perceived weakness of Soviet Russia and Germany, the forming of the League of Nations and popular hopes for international achievements in the disarmament field all contributed to the perception among liberals in Sweden that reductions in defense spending were reasonable. The political left anticipated enduring and stable peace for several decades to come. If international relations were to deteriorate in Europe, ample time would be given to react and rearm, it was assumed. These sentiments in Sweden in the late-1930s unfortunately very much resemble the situation and thinking of present-day Sweden, which has led to reforms that leave the country relatively unprepared for territorial defense until at least the early-2020s.

It was only the swift German invasion of Denmark and Norway in April 1940 that brought a complete change of attitude in Stockholm, as Sweden was suddenly squarely in the German orbit. Sweden changed its defense posture and embarked upon an

ambitious armament program. The goals formulated in 1940 were not, however, achieved until several years after the conclusion of World War II. Even 70 years ago, building capability and readiness was time consuming.

Although formally neutral, Sweden could not maintain strict neutrality during World War II and neither was it in her interest. Sweden was nonaligned, and adapted to the changing war situation. Strong popular support for Finland resulted in perhaps the largest ever deployment of a volunteer military force, about 8,500 men to Northern Finland in early-1940, including one-third of the Swedish Air Force.

For Germany, occupation of Norway brought logistical problems, and the Nazis immediately put strong pressure on Sweden for permission to use Swedish railways for transporting troops and supplies to the north. Sweden soon gave in, and transit transports of German soldiers “on leave” as well as military equipment began in July 1940. Finland accepted German transit traffic on essentially equal terms 2 months later. The German traffic through Sweden continued until August 1943. By this time, Germany’s strength was already fading. Allied powers had for some time demanded that Sweden cut down cooperation with Germany and improve relations with them. As the Allied bombing campaign gained strength and airspace control became increasingly difficult, Allied bombers returning from Germany on northerly courses occasionally intruded into Swedish airspace. Sweden had to respond. Anecdotes of radio conversations between Allied aircrews and Swedish air defenses on the ground suggest a cooperative attitude despite the formalities of challenging these overflights.⁴

While the Nordic countries all drew different formative experiences from World War II, the different paths of national defense that they then embarked upon were further influenced by the new geopolitical situation after 1945, the rise of the Iron Curtain, and the emerging Cold War, as well as the simple geographical location of the different countries.

THE NORDIC COLD WAR EXPERIENCE

Finland.

Immediately after the war, an entirely new political epoch started for the Nordic states. Finland, in particular, had to adapt to co-existence with the world's indisputable new great power, the Soviet Union, whose ambitions to extend both its social system and geopolitical sphere of interest could not be mistaken. The role of Finland as a front-line state was thus set, and this is a role that Finland continues to fill today: the unique circumstances of being "neighbor to a superpower and next door to a military alliance" mean that the Finnish defense posture is key to the security of the Nordic region as a whole, and this posture receives close attention in this monograph accordingly.⁵ As put by one leading politician when considering a past proposal for a Nordic defense treaty: "Finland has always been the defender of Sweden. This would just be making it official."⁶

At the outset of the Cold War, Finland was obliged to make significant concessions curtailing the country's sovereignty. The most important of these two was the tough peace treaty of 1947 with former enemies, the Soviet Union and Great Britain; and the so-called 1948 Treaty on Friendship, Cooperation and

Mutual Assistance (FCMA Treaty) between Finland and the Soviet Union. Under these agreements, the peacetime military strength and permitted armament of the Finnish army were limited so dramatically that her defense capability rapidly collapsed. The Finnish government energetically attempted to acquire some sort of preferential right of interpretation regarding the true content of the treaty during the next 40 years, but naturally the Soviet Union and the Western powers drew their own conclusions. Finland's policy of neutrality hence became hotly disputed. Most authorities were not sure how to take Finland, and there was particular uncertainty concerning the question of how she would act in crisis situations.

Author and journalist Jukka Rislakki has conducted a thorough and convincing study of the relations of the U.S. and other Western powers to Finland during the Cold War.⁷ One of Rislakki's specific findings is that the main western actors were surprisingly willing and ready to support Finland, without definite military undertakings. Possible military support would be given on an ad hoc basis in a war situation and only if Finland chose the West rather than the Soviets.

Finnish neutrality during the Cold War, of course, demanded defense in all directions. In reality, however, intrusions from the West into Finnish territory apparently would not have been met with more than token "resistance," if at all.⁸ An attack from the West simply was not considered a very serious option. Real contingency plans were aimed at fighting potential Soviet ground forces attacks. For security reasons, these were not put on paper, but rather entrusted to selected key military personnel responsible for maintaining them. In 1974, newly appointed Chief of Defense General Lauri Sutela offered to present operational

plans to his Supreme Commander, President Urho Kekkonen, but the latter respectfully declined, saying: "I'm not interested in details, but I rely on you and trust that you know what you have to do."⁹ Prudence apparently dictated his choice: What he didn't know, he couldn't inadvertently reveal in the frequent talks he had with the Russians.

Finland's policy of neutrality during the Cold War sought particular support from the so-called Nordic balance, a term coined by the Norwegians, or Nordic stability as the Finns called it, and from Sweden's impressively strong defense. During the period, Nordic collaboration was thus more important for Finland than for other Nordic countries. This gave Finland an opportunity to profile herself in her natural reference group, the Nordic countries. Great efforts were made, particularly in Finland and Norway, to reach mutual understanding on defense, but this did not always succeed.

The cornerstone of the Finnish defense concept was, and still is, compulsory conscription. In the 1970s, this could generate a 700,000-strong wartime force consisting mostly of trained reserves. The drawback, obvious to all informed observers at home and abroad, was that adequate weaponry and equipment sufficed only for a small fraction of the mobilized army. Many would only have been provided with worn-out wartime weapons. This choice was one of necessity, since the Finnish national economy was too small to provide for well-equipped armed forces capable of defending the country alone against a superpower. Therefore, neutral Finnish foreign policy, and good, friendly and mutually beneficial relations with the Soviet Union became Finland's main security tool, and military policy was relegated to a minor role.

Accordingly, defense capability was measured so as to provide an initial threshold capability, high enough to give an adversary serious pause for thought about costs and risks.

The extent of Soviet pressure against Finland varied over the years, but very serious challenges by the Russians were felt on more than one occasion. A crisis situation arose on October 30, 1961, when the Soviet Union made a formidable demonstration of power, exploding the enormous "Tsar bomb" equivalent to 57 megatons of TNT over Novaya Zemlya. On the same day, Finland received a diplomatic note from the Soviet Union regarding a review of bilateral relations, which led to great concern in Finland and also in its neighboring countries, and more generally in the West. Russia's timing was well judged; Kekkonen was on a state visit to the United States. He was then ordered to travel not to Moscow, but all the way to Novosibirsk for talks with the Soviet leaders. It was later assessed that Kekkonen had overreached in his attempts to edge Finland slowly in the direction of the West, and the Soviet leaders did not tolerate this.

Another serious incident occurred in 1978 during an official visit to Finland, when Soviet Defense Minister Marshal Dmitry Ustinov suggested joint military exercises between the Finnish and Soviet armies. Kekkonen's approach was to ignore the proposal, and he successfully avoided discussing the topic altogether. However, the Finnish Chief of Defense, with skillful diplomatic assistance, rejected the proposal politely, but decisively.¹⁰

Sweden.

Through good luck and good judgment, Sweden had succeeded in staying out of World War II, and so emerged from the war stronger than any of her Nordic neighbors. The imminent threat to Sweden from Nazi Germany in 1940 was contained as a result of British resistance. Later, the Allied Powers' war effort against Germany largely removed the existential threat against Sweden.¹¹

After the war, however, all Scandinavian countries had to decide their security direction. As relations between the former Allies began to deteriorate and, in Winston Churchill's words, "an iron curtain descended across the Continent,"¹² Sweden, in particular, began to explore the possibility of a Scandinavian defense alliance of neutral countries between East and West. Negotiations between Sweden, Norway, and Denmark took place in 1948-49, but eventually broke down as Norway and Denmark opted out. This defense alliance was not felt to be robust enough to counterbalance Soviet power, and, in addition, Oslo and Copenhagen saw no particular value in neutrality. Therefore, they instead joined those western countries that founded the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in 1949.¹³

Throughout the Cold War, defense planning in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark was based on territorial defense and general conscription. In Sweden, defense spending was of the order of 3-4 percent of gross domestic product (GDP), and the capability generated in all three military branches to repel invasion well beyond Swedish borders was most impressive. At the end of the Cold War in 1988, the Swedish wartime strength was about 850,000, including a 100,000-strong Home

Guard. The army consisted altogether of 29 brigades or brigade equivalents, five of which were armored. The air force had about 350 combat aircraft, equipped with state-of-the-art air combat and anti-ship missiles, in 24 interceptor, attack, and reconnaissance wings. The navy's battle order consisted of over 70 surface combat ships, mine warfare vessels, and a dozen very capable and silent submarines. In addition, there were over 20 Swedish coastal artillery units with high fire-power, most of which were placed in strongly fortified permanent positions, in addition to four mobile units equipped with high-precision anti-ship missiles.¹⁴

So-called armed neutrality became the trademark of neutral Sweden. The military capability of Sweden and its domestic military technology were respected worldwide, and Sweden's role in upholding Nordic balance/stability was crucial. This also served Finland well. In the beginning of the 1990s, Sweden's neutrality was, however, revealed to be rather less than it had been supposed to be during the Cold War. Thorough later research by Dr. Robert Dalsjö¹⁵ and Mr. Mikael Holmström,¹⁶ security policy reporter at the Swedish daily *Dagens Nyheter*, has disclosed conclusively that Sweden engaged in secret but elaborate military co-operation arrangements with her NATO neighbors Norway and Denmark, and more importantly with the United States and the United Kingdom (UK). According to Dalsjö:

Sweden not only based parts of its Cold War security policy on the expectation that the Western powers would provide military assistance in case of a Soviet attack. In addition, the [Swedish] cabinet had also secretly authorized the military authorities to undertake preparations for this event, and a number of measures had been taken.¹⁷

This Swedish secret arrangement evolved during several decades parallel with the Soviet military build-up, and was only known to extremely few government and military leaders. It is, however, not very likely that the Russians were unaware of it. Only the Swedish people knew nothing about it, which clearly created operational difficulties. The major drawback was that the arrangement could not be trained or tested among the professional military, which raises questions about its viability in a true armed conflict.

In addition, Dalsjö has tested Swedish neutrality in five counterfactual gaming scenarios covering a broad spectrum. In two cases, Sweden succeeded in staying out of the war, but in the other three (Soviet policy of extortion, an attack on Sweden alone, and a major conflict in Europe), Sweden was pulled into the conflict. In the first case, the East was victorious, and the Soviet side gained control of continental Europe, including Norway and Denmark. The outlook for preserving democracy and independence would have been grim in the long term. In the second case, the West won, and it was only in this case that Sweden's stated goals regarding its neutral policy would have been met.¹⁸

Norway and Denmark.

Peace in Europe in 1945 was the beginning of a golden age for the Norwegian armed forces, based on general conscription. After joining NATO in 1949, defense expenditure rose steadily and was 4.7 percent of GDP (30 percent of the state budget) in 1952-53. The peak of strength and resources came in the 1950s and 1960s, with a 350,000-strong force being included in contingency planning of the time.¹⁹ A quarter of a

century later, mobilized wartime strength had been reduced by about 100,000.²⁰ General conscription remained in force, but only a few were chosen for duty. This remains the case today.²¹

Throughout the Cold War, Denmark's "total defense policy," based on general conscription, generated 100,000 personnel for the armed forces upon mobilization, backed by the 80,000-strong voluntary Home Guard. Given Denmark's strategic position as the "cork in the Baltic Sea bottle" and the "bridge" between NATO's central front and northern flank, allied reinforcements were deemed critical.²²

As NATO members, Denmark and Norway skillfully played their role in the Nordic balancing act during the Cold War. Both countries refused to have foreign troops stationed permanently on their soil or nuclear weapons deployed. They also showed reluctance toward NATO exercises in the Baltic Sea and close to the border of the Soviet Union. This policy of nonprovocation toward the Soviet Union contributed to stability in the area.²³

For Denmark, the question of military protection has altogether been a NATO matter. Denmark can be described as an especially staunch ally of NATO and the United States, in particular. Although Denmark is a long-time member of the European Union (EU), Denmark has not and does not participate in EU's military policy, which it deems counterproductive to its own national interests.

The Danish view is rather critical of the Nordic position, as displayed by Sweden and perhaps also Finland, of being different from Europe and better than Europe, and unique in offering a cooperative alternative to the Cold War policies of the superpowers

and the old great powers in Europe. According to one argument:

Nordic identity politics and Cold War value promotion in the [United Nations] was a 'luxury good', only affordable because the Nordics were allowed a free ride on a security order created by the presence of an American security guarantee to Western Europe and the institutionalization of the European continent.²⁴

Hidden Cold War Cooperation with the United States.

In order to understand the possible forms of military-related cooperation between Finland, Sweden, and the United States during the Cold War, it is useful to see how this played out between the Nordic countries themselves. As members of NATO, Norway and Denmark were free to discuss any matter within that framework. Discussions with non-NATO members were more complicated. "Serious defense and security policy discussions at the formal Nordic fora were . . . officially taboo," leading Finnish defense expert and former government official Dr. Pauli Järvenpää wrote in early-2014.

In reality, though, the situation was not so clear-cut. The Nordic countries' military intelligence organizations continued to talk to each other behind the scenes, and the same Nordic officials and experts who gathered to discuss UN peacekeeping issues could in the margins privately discuss more hardcore defense policy matters.²⁵

Basic geopolitical and geographical facts and national policies largely defined the framework of mili-

tary cooperation between the United States and Sweden and Finland, respectively. Sweden was clearly in a more favorable position than Finland, but the latter had certain qualities, generated through Finland's war experience with the Soviet Union and the profound need to understand Russian thinking thoroughly, that were of interest to the United States and which the United States wanted to exploit through state-to-state cooperation, but also covertly. A more general U.S. policy interest was to prevent Finland from falling entirely into the Soviet orbit.

Sweden benefitted from the basic military fact that Norway's defense in depth was far too narrow and had to be extended. U.S. and NATO contingency planning therefore largely covered Swedish territory, too. Sweden thus took steps to facilitate receiving aid and U.S. forces on her soil and also made some technical preparations to be able to fight jointly. One particular example of such a step was secret links between NATO air control systems in Norway and those of the impressive Swedish air force. The flip of a switch "instantly lit up the maps in the situation room considerably," according to one insider.²⁶ The drawback was that strict Swedish neutrality determined what was and was not possible. These arrangements were secret and could not be used for joint training purposes. They were items in a toolbox to be used, but only in war.

Intelligence cooperation between Sweden and the West, and the United States in particular, is perhaps one of the most important forms of long-time military cooperation between the countries.²⁷ The Swedish National Radio Establishment (FRA) is an acknowledged and respected actor in the signal intelligence field and has cooperated with the National Security Agency for a very long time.²⁸

One particular feature of Swedish neutrality during the Cold War was to emphasize reliance on domestically built arms, such as fighter aircraft and army and navy equipment. The results were impressive. But Sweden increasingly had to rely on subsystems, components, and spare parts from foreign sources, most often American. Defense industrial cooperation between Sweden and the United States therefore also has a long legacy. Sweden was among the first countries to receive U.S. built heat-seeking and radar guided air-to-air missiles, as well as licenses to produce these domestically.²⁹ Sweden, which had a serious domestic nuclear weapons development program in the 1950s and 1960s that the United States wanted to end, skillfully negotiated benefits from the United States as a compensation for abandoning the military nuclear program, which eventually took place in 1968 as Sweden was among the first signatories of the Non-Proliferation Treaty. U.S. National Security Council policy recommendations in 1960 specifically stated:

Provide no grant military assistance to Sweden. However, be prepared to sell to Sweden military materiel, and to provide training to Sweden on a reimbursable basis. With due regard to NATO requirements, and provided that prior offer to NATO allies has been made, be prepared to sell to Sweden modern weapons systems from NATO or U.S. production or to authorize licensing arrangements for manufacture in Sweden.³⁰

Finland, by contrast, emerged from having twice only barely avoided military defeat against an overwhelmingly strong adversary, which would have led to complete loss of its sovereignty. Finland was war-torn and poor, with its economy in shambles. Politically, Finland's freedom of action was curtailed, and,

for that reason, it had to turn down such vitally important U.S. initiatives as Marshall Plan aid.

At the time, U.S. understanding of the Finnish dilemma and balancing act was perhaps not deep enough, as U.S. good intentions and acts of support and good will were rejected for reasons that Washington could not always comprehend. From a Finnish viewpoint, the American overtures were often counterproductive. Under these circumstances, Finnish-U.S. defense cooperation during the Cold War was an extremely sensitive issue.

It was, however, also very much in Finland's interest to establish military communication links between Finland and the United States. Not surprisingly, military intelligence was the preferred tool. As chief of Finnish intelligence, Colonel Lauri Sutela made his first visit to Langley in the early-1960s, disguised as a Belgian scientist.³¹ The Americans were interested in Finnish views and assessments concerning the Soviet Union in particular. Procedures for exchange of military information were agreed upon, and this arrangement has been developed ever since.

During the first years of the Cold War, when U.S. National Technical Means were in their infancy, the United States recruited seasoned, highly decorated Finnish war-time rangers to collect information and to scout on Soviet territory, particularly in the Kola and the Karelian Isthmus. This activity was also related to the Scandinavian plans for a **stay-behind** network of partisans, a countermeasure against possible Soviet invasion.³²

Perceptions of Finland as some kind of a semi-Soviet state were, however, deeply rooted. When Sutela first visited the United States as Chief of Defense 13 years later in 1975, he was greeted at the reception by

a U.S. general: "Now you finally got permission of the Soviet Union to travel here, did you?"³³ To put these remarks in context, former chairman of the UK's Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC) Sir Paul Lever noticed on a tour of Soviet secret police (KGB) headquarters in Moscow that the photo gallery of foreigners that had spied for the Soviet Union did not include any Finns at all.³⁴ Nevertheless, Sutela established good working relations with the United States and communicated directly with the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

The United States also benefitted from a number of particularly distinguished Finnish military officers, who left Finland for various reasons after the war and ultimately settled in the United States. The two most famous were Finland's war-time Chief of Intelligence, Colonel Aladár (a.k.a. Andrew) Paasonen and Army Colonel Alpo K. Marttinen. Both were strongly urged by Finnish Supreme Commander Marshal Carl Gustaf Mannerheim himself to leave Finland in 1945, partly for reasons of their personal safety but also in the greater interest of Finland. After Mannerheim's death in January 1951 in Switzerland, Paasonen, who had assisted Mannerheim in writing his memoirs, offered a Central Intelligence Agency representative in Bern his services. The Agency recruited him immediately. Paasonen was, of course, a very valuable source, but he was also useful in educating and training agents. Later, he was transferred to Germany where he interrogated defectors from the East.³⁵ He also played a role in cooling down the U.S. organized scouting patrols and reconnaissance flights into Soviet territory from Finland, which had become so frequent and daring as to cause the Finnish government concern.

Marttinen had distinguished himself as a young Captain in the Winter War, having planned a number of the spectacular operations where several Soviet divisions were annihilated. During the massive Russian onslaught in the summer offensive in 1944, his regiment was the first to stop the Russian advance into Finland proper. Marttinen later made another distinguished military career in the U.S. Army, rising to the rank of colonel. Like his colleague and friend Paasonen, Marttinen also offered U.S. intelligence valuable services.

The U.S. Army recognized the particular skills of the Finnish officers, especially in winter warfare, and they were tasked to write new field manuals as well as to train U.S. Soldiers in these skills. A series of field manuals were published in 1951-52 (*Field Manual [FM] 31-70, Basic Arctic Manual; FM 31-71, Northern Operations; FM 31-72, Administration in the Arctic; and FM 31-73, Skiing and Snowshoeing*).³⁶ Marttinen died in 1975 and is buried in the military cemetery in Ft. Leavenworth, KS.

POST-COLD WAR DEVELOPMENTS

Finland.

Nobody could know for sure where the dramatic geopolitical changes at the end of the 1980s were to lead, but in Finland, developments were followed carefully, and the Finns were prepared to take calculated risks to improve their political-security situation. On September 21, 1990, Finland's government unilaterally declared that the provisions of the Paris Peace Treaty of 1947 limiting Finland's sovereignty had lost their meaning. At the same time, President Mauno

Koivisto reinterpreted the FCMA Treaty, which finally disappeared into history on the fall of the Soviet Union in December 1991.

Having loosened the political chains of the Cold War, the next step of integration into Western political structures was an application for Finnish membership in the EU. Finland, Sweden, and Austria became Union members on January 1, 1995. Finland has consistently striven to penetrate to the core of the EU. There is active collaboration over a joint foreign and security policy and a wish to strengthen the Union's crisis-management capability. Finland, however, decided not to aim for NATO membership, but rather engaged in a very ambitious Partnership for Peace program.

Finland adapted to the new European security order after the end of the Cold War and, while retaining general conscription, adjusted the wartime strength of the Finnish Defense Forces accordingly. While there were no longer restrictions on Finnish peace-time strength, which was about 30,000 and progressively shrinking because of demographic reasons, the total wartime strength had been reduced to 450,000 in 1997, in 2008 to 350,000, and, after the conclusion of the present defense reform, it dropped to 230,000 in 2015.³⁷ A more detailed description of this process follows.

Sweden.

The basic structure and operational doctrine of the Swedish defense forces—territorial defense against invasion—survived well into the new millennium. Spending levels, however, constantly exceeded what was allocated in the budget, and manpower and capability levels could not be maintained. Business as usual

proved untenable in the long run. In 2009, the Swedish Parliament adopted a bill on Defense Structure 2014, a very radical departure from previous arrangements toward a small professional army, primarily tailored for crisis management operations and rapid reaction defense capability, adapted to a defense spending level of about half the 2.5 percent GDP level of 1988.

The former Swedish defense organization was rapidly dismantled as introduction of the new structure met with profound difficulties. It is generally believed that the new personnel structure will not be implemented until 2023 and that arms procurement will not nearly meet the equipment needs originally stated. The Swedish Parliamentary Defense Commission's report in May 2014 does not dispel these misgivings.³⁸ At the time of this writing, the debate is in high gear, and tough criticism from defense experts, often members of the prestigious Royal Swedish Academy of War Sciences, has been leveled at the Swedish Government's reluctance to adapt spending to the revised security and threat assessment and the real needs perceived.³⁹

Norway and Denmark.

Norway has undergone the same kind of defense structure reforms as most other NATO countries. Mobilization defense has been abandoned in favor of a rapid reaction capability defense, which shall provide a war prevention threshold based on NATO membership.⁴⁰ Peacetime strength in 2014 is about 23,000, and 83,000 after mobilization.⁴¹ According to Professor Paal Sigurd Hilde:

Both traditionally and at present, Norway's security focus has to a significant degree been maritime in

nature and directed towards the west and north. The High North, equating in Norwegian usage roughly the wider Barents Sea region, has since the early 1950s been Norway's primary security concern. It remains so today, though obviously for somewhat different reasons than during the Cold War.

... Throughout the Cold War, Norwegian priorities in NATO included ensuring that the defense of Norway was tied to that of Central Europe, that the US and UK were represented on a high level in NATO commands in Norway, and that the US and other major allies committed land forces to the reinforcement of Norway in case of conflict.⁴²

The key passages in the White Paper submitted to the Norwegian Parliament concerning the main tasks of the Norwegian Armed Forces read:

The intention of a war preventing threshold is to achieve that a potential aggressor abstains from using military force against Norway. The Armed Forces shall have a capability to react immediately, efficiently and with relevant means if Norway is pressured, assaulted or attacked, and shall have capability to joint action within the framework of the collective defense of NATO. A capability to manage such military challenges shall contribute so that they don't materialize. NATO membership is the basis of the war preventing threshold.⁴³

In other words, as stated in a nutshell from former Chief of Defense General Sverre Diesen, "Norway has to ensure that there is no vacuum between what is too big for Norway and too small for NATO."

Prepositioning U.S. military equipment in Norway has been a key component of U.S.-Norwegian bilateral military cooperation. The quantitative scale, of

course, has diminished since the Cold War, but the arrangement (Marine Corps Prepositioning Program Norway) has nevertheless survived.⁴⁴ In August 2014, it was reported that the United States will preposition Abrams M1A1 main battle tanks and other armored vehicles in Norway.⁴⁵ In addition, Norway is also tasked with providing facilities for a NATO detachment and deployment of airborne early warning systems at the Air Force Base in Ørland. But Norway's continuing military vulnerability was acknowledged in late September 2014, when Defense Minister Ine Eriksen Søreide announced that defense will have to be radically upgraded, as a direct result of the increased concern over Russia.⁴⁶

After the end of the Cold War, Denmark, too, adapted to the "new realities" and began restructuring the army from a force exclusively dedicated to local defense to an army able to project the Danish International Brigade and other rapid reaction forces abroad in contingencies reaching from humanitarian operations, peacekeeping, and peacemaking to out-right combat operations in support of UN, NATO, and the United States.

The present purpose and task of the armed forces of Denmark is defined in a law that came into force on March 1, 2001.⁴⁷ This defines a number of purposes and tasks. The primary purpose is to prevent conflicts and war, preserve the sovereignty of Denmark, secure the continuing existence and integrity of the independent Kingdom of Denmark and further a peaceful development in the world with respect to human rights. Its primary tasks are: NATO participation in accordance with the strategy of the alliance; to detect and repel any violation of sovereignty of Danish territory (including Greenland and the Faroe Islands); defense coopera-

tion with non-NATO members, especially Central and East European countries; international missions in the area of conflict prevention, crisis-control, humanitarian assistance, peacemaking, and peacekeeping; participation in **total defense** in cooperation with civilian resources; and finally, maintenance of a sizable force to execute these tasks at all times.

Denmark clearly stands out from the other Nordic countries in this respect. Denmark has not refrained from using force even in UN operations—as in the case of a tank battle against Serbian armored units in Bosnia.⁴⁸ Denmark has participated as a U.S. ally in Iraq and deployed a significant force in Afghanistan. An American former Special Operations Forces (SOF) colonel commended the Danish input in the counterinsurgency role in the difficult Helmand province in March 2009: “The Danes have the best trained and equipped force in Afghanistan. They take the hardest assignments, which they execute with outstanding professionalism and resilience. They never complain.”⁴⁹

Nordic Cooperation: Early Steps.

In June 2008, former Norwegian foreign and defense minister Thorvald Stoltenberg was asked by Nordic foreign ministers to draw up proposals for closer foreign and security policy cooperation between the Nordic countries. At the same time, the Chiefs of Defense of Norway, Finland, and Sweden submitted a common report, the Nordic Supportive Defence Structures Report, to their respective governments and presented the essential contents in an op-ed article published in their three leading national newspapers, *Aftenposten*, *Helsingin Sanomat*, and *Svenska dagbladet*.⁵⁰

The Chiefs had identified 140 areas of possible defense cooperation, 40 of which could be carried out rather rapidly. From the perspective of defense planning, the Chiefs' report was significant. *Aftenposten* later reported that the U.S. ambassador to Norway had expressed concern over this development. In the view of Ambassador Benson K. Whitney, the Nordic move contained clear dangers to U.S. interests. Politically, it was feared, Nordic cooperation could weaken the traditionally strong defense ties between the United States and Norway.⁵¹

Stoltenberg presented his report in February 2009.⁵² Its essence was a list of 13 specific proposals, starting with setting up a Nordic Stabilization Task Force for international peace-building purposes. Stoltenberg's proposal for air surveillance over Icelandic airspace took a big step forward in February 2014, as aircraft from NATO partners Finland and Sweden gathered in Iceland for the Iceland Air Meet event, together with the Norwegian Air Force, which had assumed the NATO peacetime preparedness mission over Iceland.

Stoltenberg presented four specific proposals concerning maritime monitoring and arctic issues, which were widely perceived to reflect specific Norwegian interests. Only two proposals addressed direct military cooperation. They built on the earlier proposals by the Finnish, Norwegian, and Swedish Chiefs of Defense, and concerned cooperation on issues such as transport and lift capability, medical services, education, materiel and exercise ranges. A separate proposal was to establish a Nordic amphibious unit, built on already existing units and cooperation between Finland and Sweden. Stoltenberg's last proposal regarded a declaration of solidarity:

The Nordic governments should issue a mutual declaration of solidarity in which they commit themselves to clarifying how they would respond if a Nordic country were subject to external attack or undue pressure.⁵³

The language used by Stoltenberg can be interpreted as indicating the magnitude of the political difficulties entailed in discussion of binding security guarantees between the Nordic countries. For guarantees to be at all realistic, each country should, as a starting point, be capable of both giving and receiving military aid. This is not currently the case, although work is in progress, for non-NATO nations Finland and Sweden, for whom legally binding host nation support agreements with NATO would be needed.⁵⁴

The Danish and Norwegian views are that the question would be resolved if Finland and Sweden were to change political course and join NATO. At present, NATO membership is still a domestic political minefield in both Finland and Sweden, with the question of membership the subject of a political stalemate that has remained rock-solid over decades.⁵⁵ But the abrupt change in the political landscape of Europe signaled by Russia's invasion and annexation of parts of Ukraine has triggered a real debate and the first significant shift in public opinion polls for some time.⁵⁶ With a new sense of urgency over the issue of membership, it has been suggested that Finland's upcoming elections in the spring of 2015 could in effect be a referendum on joining NATO.⁵⁷

Nordic Defense Cooperation.

Meanwhile, however, the Nordic military communities have long understood that capabilities cooperation will be a key issue for their respective countries. Austerity measures and the general decline of military capability in European NATO and elsewhere, as well as the U.S. “Asia pivot” policy, have exacerbated this need still further. Great expectations have therefore been attached to the rather less ambitious Nordic Defense Cooperation structure (NORDEFECO).

Also in 2008, Nordic Ministry of Defense officials began to explore the possibilities of replacing the existing multiple defense-related cooperation arrangements between their countries with one single structure. The advantages and possible benefits were recognized in all Nordic capitals, and NORDEFECO was established in 2009, with a stated aim of:

The main aim and purpose of the Nordic Defense Cooperation (NORDEFECO) is to strengthen the participating nations’ national defense, explore common synergies and facilitate efficient common solutions.⁵⁸

NORDEFECO is flexible in its format, and the participants can choose the projects in which they want to take part. Decisions are taken by consensus, but without veto rights. This means that a country can opt out, but not prevent other countries from going ahead if they wish to do so. In practice, this means that much of the cooperation is likely to be carried out bilaterally or trilaterally, but not to the detriment of other members.⁵⁹

NORDEFECO has an annually rotating chairmanship, and the Ministers of Defense and Defense Policy

Directors of member states meet twice a year. Practical work is coordinated by a Defense Policy Steering Committee, which, in turn, gives tasks to and receives military advice from the Military Coordination Committee (MCC).

The military level of NORDEFCO is divided into five Cooperation Areas (COPAs) subordinate to the MCC, namely Capabilities, Human Resources and Education, Training and Exercises, Operations, and Armaments. The COPAs cover the whole defense force spectrum, but with different time perspectives.

Finland assumed the chairmanship of NORDEFCO for the second time in 2013. Reflecting on achievements during the year, the Political Steering Committee stated:

Perhaps the most important achievement . . . was the development of the NORDEFCO 'vision 2020'; renewing the political commitment in deepening our cooperation and giving guidance to our armed forces in areas such as maritime and air surveillance, exercise cooperation and rapid deployment in the framework of the EU and NATO. The vision will form the basis of the political guidance of the Nordic defense cooperation as we move towards 2020.⁶⁰

The activities and achievements for 2013 listed by MCC Chairman Lieutenant General Mika Peltonen included a 4-year action plan for 2014-17, coordinated on the military and political level. This plan includes a clear ambition to test the future Nordic Battalion Task Force 2020 during Exercise Cold Response in 2016.⁶¹

But despite advancing rapidly over the course of 5 years, NORDEFCO still has a long way to go from information exchange toward effective cooperation. Peltonen's report for 2013 also highlighted that:

Nordic defense cooperation has become more systematic and goal-oriented; day-to-day cooperation and the exchange of information have increased considerably. Although top-down (Mil/Pol) **long-term commitment is still needed to reach desirable effects**, progress is made in small steps in the right direction. Nordic thinking in our nations has increased on the military level from a chair-nation driven Annual Action Plan to a more Nordic Action Plan with a longer horizon. Furthermore, NORDEFECO has been recognized as an attractive regional military cooperation forum for cooperation, benchmarking and exchanging information.⁶² [author's emphasis]

For all its qualities, NORDEFECO is and will remain only a military-political tool. NORDEFECO was formed at a time when no traditional external threats were felt in the Nordic countries and, except for Finland, national territorial defense was no longer deemed relevant. For nonaligned countries like Finland and Sweden, NORDEFECO is not a game changer in the same sense as joining NATO or forming a coalition of the willing, committed to binding solidarity with each other.

Joint Procurement.

Coordinated multinational military procurement is a field that Nordic politicians like to see as a pragmatic way to increase efficiency and save costs. Unfortunately, practice does not reflect theory, and, all too often, ambitious joint procurement projects have misfired. Denmark, Sweden, and Norway could not agree on Project Viking, an attempt to develop a common submarine. Finland and Sweden cooperated in designing and producing the AMOS 120 millimeter

twin-barreled mortar turret, which was then dropped by Sweden and shelved as artillery in its reorganization.⁶³ More recent failures include the Swedish-Norwegian archer artillery system, and a major joint Swedish-Norwegian purchase of military trucks is in jeopardy.

The Nordic Standard Helicopter Project initiated in the late-1990s is a prime example. After lengthy deliberations, all four countries went their separate ways: Denmark eventually settled for the Italian Agusta EH-101, while Finland, Sweden, and Norway chose different versions of the French-German NH-90. Differing technical demands and preferences slowed down deliveries to such a degree that the NH-90 project has not been fully concluded even now, some 15 years later.

This is, however, not an unusual outcome when dealing with multinational European contractors. Defense company ownerships in Europe are complicated, and it is not always easy to ascertain that purchase is based on fair competition. Synchronizing national needs with more common multinational ambitions has proved to be a tricky business. Furthermore, equipment life-cycles in different countries may differ too much from each other for joint purchases to make sense, and operational demands, including usage and deployment in differing environments, also contribute to the difficulties.

Bilateral Finnish-Swedish Cooperation.

Finland and Sweden signed a bilateral action plan for deepened peace-time defense cooperation in May 2014.⁶⁴ When announcing the contents of plan, ministers Karin Enström (Sweden) and Carl Haglund (Fin-

land) listed nine specific areas for bilateral cooperation. Among those were the following two concerning the army:

1. Explore the possibilities to deepen bilateral cooperation in exercises, education, gender issues, and training, for example in the area of artillery, basic military training, winter training, and mechanized units, as well as in common use of training facilities.

2. Explore the possibilities to contribute combined units to international exercises and operations, as well as to force registers in the UN, the EU and NATO.

Furthermore, the plan stated:

The Defence Forces will deliver a preliminary joint report on feasible cooperation areas by October 2014. The Defence Forces will continuously make suggestions for concrete cooperation areas as their work progresses but no later than January 2015. The political decisions concerning deepened bilateral cooperation in specific areas both at the MoD and Defence Forces level will be made continuously starting in February 2015.

The practical cooperation areas will be incorporated in the regular planning process of the respective Defence Forces beginning no later than in the spring of 2015.⁶⁵

A NEW ERA OF VULNERABILITY?

In a report published in June 2014, researchers from the Swedish National Defence Research Establishment (FOI) summarized the major consequences for European security of Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea and aggression in eastern Ukraine as follows:

Geopolitical struggle has returned with a vengeance and will not go away . . . this presents a fundamental challenge to the permanent formation of a liberal, rules-based security order in Europe. This has been at the center of political efforts in Europe during at least the last quarter-century. What has happened, as an immediate consequence of the crisis over Ukraine, is that geopolitical struggle and traditional balance of power issues have been brought out into the security policy daylight again. This may influence the European security order in a long-term perspective. What is actually most likely is that the current antagonism between, on the one hand, Russia, and on the other, the United States and most of Europe, generates several forms of negative spirals.⁶⁶

“Little did we know a year ago what kinds of challenges we would face during the coming year,” Swedish foreign minister Carl Bildt wrote in his blog at the time.⁶⁷ Later, Finnish foreign minister Alexander Stubb echoed the sentiment, asking “Were we blind?” in a major speech in Berlin.⁶⁸ These astonishing admissions were by no means unique since, with the exception of a few Eastern European countries such as Poland and the Baltic States, the dramatic events in Ukraine beginning in November 2013 came as a major strategic surprise for Western nations — a situation that a report by the UK’s Parliamentary Defence Committee blamed on the wasting away of analytical expertise covering Russia.⁶⁹ These surprises simply should not occur. Ample warning had been given over many years, but the major western governments in particular did not pay attention.⁷⁰ One especially noteworthy warning was the open letter to the Barack Obama Administration published by 22 prominent Baltic and Eastern European leaders in July 2009. They noted that “Russia is back as a revisionist power pursuing a 19th-century agenda with 21st-century tactics and methods.”⁷¹

Previously, Finnish minister of defense Jyri Häkämies had voiced the concern of the Finnish defense community in a speech in Washington in September 2007 titled, "The three main security challenges for Finland today are Russia, Russia, and Russia. And not only for Finland, but for all of us."⁷² Mr. Häkämies' remarks, however prophetic, created a political storm back home in Finland. Despite its well-deserved reputation for knowing and understanding Russia, Finland did not act as a whistleblower, but kept well in line with other countries that read the signs on Russia wrongly or simply did not care. It should be noted that defense researchers in Finland and Sweden contributed a consistently more sober view of the increasingly disturbing developments in Russia, but their analysis was not fully appreciated by policymakers and academics, who were inclined to be more optimistic. In some important decisionmaking circles, defense researchers' findings were found too disturbing to be taken seriously and were therefore either treated with silence or rejected outright.⁷³

From a Nordic viewpoint in particular, it is alarming and highly regrettable that the European security order, tediously built over a span of more than 4 decades, is in disarray. This includes the Helsinki Final Act of 1975 and particularly its clause regarding the sanctity of borders between states. In 1975, this agreement that borders could be changed only peacefully in the future was an unexpected and remarkable diplomatic achievement—especially given its signing in the capital of a nation whose position was still uncertain. This is the backdrop to the comment by Haglund in June 2014: "Are we in Europe returning to a time when state borders can be unilaterally displaced by use of military force or threat thereof?"⁷⁴ Conversely,

the assurance by President Obama in Tallinn, Estonia, in September 2014 that “borders cannot be redrawn at the barrel of a gun” rather overlooks the repeated demonstration by President Vladimir Putin that, yes, they can.⁷⁵

While major western powers are, for the time being, rejecting the notion of a new Cold War for the simple reason that Russia is perceived to be too weak to threaten their core interests, Russia nevertheless accuses the West of reintroducing Cold War mentality and diplomacy, forcing Russia into a new Cold War by refusing to adhere to the principle of indivisible and equal security for all. The return of hardline anti-western Russian policy is favorably received by the majority of the Russian population, saturated with disinformation about Western ill will toward Russia and how the Motherland is besieged by enemies. Putin’s approval ratings are very high. These Russian sentiments are read loud and clear in small states neighboring Russia. From this perspective, the new Cold War is real enough.

Alarm at the Russian trajectory is reaching public opinion across the Nordic states,⁷⁶ mirroring the awakening of public consciousness in other countries such as Latvia⁷⁷ and Poland.⁷⁸ But the role of Finland as the border state that safeguards Nordic security as a whole makes Finnish reactions especially vital. Finnish public opinion is, of course, divided. Some voices try to reassure the Finnish people by simply claiming that the country is safe because Finland is so different from Ukraine. Others are not convinced. But, despite the fact that Finns as a whole have been rudely awakened by events in Ukraine, the Finnish economy is faltering, austerity measures have already hit Finnish defense hard, and most politicians are not willing to

spend significantly more on defense. President Sauli Niinistö stated in June 2014 that Finland does not have the resources to maintain a credible national defense.⁷⁹ Few experts, if any, think that Finland will be able to build its defense alone. It follows that deeper cooperation between the Nordic states is essential.

PRESENT POLITICAL TRENDS AND PROSPECTS

In political terms, the situation in the Nordic countries remains deadlocked. Denmark, Norway, and Iceland are firmly in the NATO camp, while Finland and Sweden remain nonaligned, but no longer neutral. A distinct majority of the Finnish and Swedish peoples still do not see NATO membership as the preferred solution. This clearly complicates options for finding a rational long-term regional defense solution for the High North and the Baltic Sea area.

Given the nonalignment status of two Nordic countries, it is perhaps somewhat surprising that only Finland does not *a priori* assume that others will come to its aid if it is attacked. Nevertheless, building on historical experiences and international accords, the Finnish political leadership does not expect to be left entirely alone if sovereignty is threatened. Finland often refers to the EU solidarity clause stated in the Lisbon Treaty, which commits member states to help each other by all available means.

Sweden behaves otherwise and works on the assumption that others will rush to her aid, as if the unofficial security guarantee from the Cold War still was valid and in place. But it is not. U.S. Ambassador to Sweden Mark Brzezinski, in a 2014 briefing to the Swedish parliamentary defense commission, declared

clearly that there are no such security guarantees between Sweden and the United States or between Sweden and NATO. Brzezinski also voiced skepticism over the commission's conclusion that Sweden would build security together with other countries. Without NATO membership, he noted, there are no such security guarantees.⁸⁰ Thus, the U.S. attitude regarding Nordic defense cooperation appears to have remained unchanged during the last 5 to 6 years. One may, however, ask if this attitude is more a sign of military-diplomatic inertia than the result of a thorough reassessment of the demands of the new situation in Europe. A relevant question is therefore to try to find out if there is any way other than NATO membership to generate a Nordic solution for the short- and medium-term, which would improve the security position of all western actors involving the region, including the United States.

It is clear to European partners that U.S. patience with some leading NATO member states has worn thin over the last two administrations. Occasional lack of solidarity, but especially the persistent unwillingness of some major NATO members to share burdens with the United States, have had a negative impact. Many NATO members, on the other hand, have been reluctant to increase their defense budgets or assume larger responsibilities. For friendly outside observers, this raises serious concerns about the extent of mutual loyalty within the Alliance. Political cohesion within NATO also seems to be in doubt as a number of former Warsaw Pact countries seem to be "bowing to Putin's power," as a senior U.S. observer put in a *Washington Post* editorial in mid-October 2014.⁸¹

Norway and Denmark, however, are among those members of NATO that stand out favorably in terms of commitment. Both countries contributed significantly to the combined effort in Afghanistan, and former U.S. defense secretary Robert Gates commented favorably on both countries' performance in operations in Libya. Denmark's assumed burden and contributions have been particularly outstanding. At the same time, Finland and Sweden also deployed forces to Afghanistan and have contributed to building stability there. Swedish air force combat aircraft also participated in a combat role with Alliance members in Libya.

With this in mind, one could perhaps try to explore the possibilities of a coalition of the willing between the United States and the Nordic countries, based on the fundamental principle that all Nordic countries need each other and the United States for their security. As noted earlier, the United States needs to have friends and allies in place in order to secure its interests and the stability in the High North and the Baltic Sea area. In a time of both increasing tension and declining military strength and capabilities, the need to cooperate constructively together ought to be self-evident.

Four Nordic prime ministers and the president of Finland met with President Obama in Stockholm in September 2013. Previously, the three presidents of the Baltic States had met with Obama in Washington at the end of August 2013. On both occasions, observers reported that the U.S. side saw the regional leaders as a team, rather than representatives of individual states.⁸² The meeting produced a joint declaration, and a new forum, *The Nordic Security Dialogue*, was launched.⁸³ It was agreed that this dialogue will

be conducted on an annual basis. It has yet to be seen whether it will be conducted on a high enough political level to have real impact.

Yet as the deterrent and war-preventing value of the Nordic defense forces—especially Finnish and Swedish—is increasingly challenged, building common capabilities cannot wait, but should be pursued vigorously despite national political obstacles. Bearing in mind the need to synchronize Nordic defense, waiting for all Nordic countries to join NATO is not an option. Unless some extremely dramatic turn for the worse happens in the Nordic neighborhood, the wait will probably be too long. In the meantime, national defense capabilities in Finland and Sweden are likely to deteriorate further to skeleton levels.

In theory, the political building blocks for cooperation should be largely in place. Norway's and Denmark's commitment to transatlantic security is rock solid, and Finland's is unambiguous, as stated by Haglund in a speech in Washington in January 2014:

I begin my remarks by highlighting the two key security partnerships that Finland has: (1) the strong bilateral relationship with the United States, and (2) the active partnership we have with the Atlantic Alliance.⁸⁴

Haglund's speech was approved by the Finnish president and senior cabinet ministers. For a notionally non-aligned country, his statement on security partnerships is extraordinarily strong and clearly worded. It also differs essentially from the wordings of earlier Finnish administrations, where the UN, other international organizations, and soft power had a prominent role. Surprisingly enough, despite the strong factions of centrists and leftists with neutralist leanings in the

Finnish parliament, this important clarification of the Finnish government's political-security position has not yet been debated in Finland at all. Niinistö reiterated in August 2014 the need for Finland to explore all possible security partnerships, their benefits, and limits, including partnership with the United States.⁸⁵

For outside observers, the Swedish position is baffling. The new organization of the Swedish defense forces, tailored for crisis management and international operations, is severely underfunded and will not be fully in place before 2023. But the old organization, built for territorial defense, has already been dismantled altogether. Norway and Denmark are better off, but their forces, too, are primarily designed for crisis management and international operations. Now that territorial defense has returned strongly to the scene, Sweden, Norway, and Denmark all lack sufficient boots on the ground, not to mention reserves to sustain prolonged regional military presence or large-scale combat. Finland is the only Nordic country that still can generate substantial amounts of trained combat troops, but the downside is that the bulk of the Finnish mobilization army sorely lacks modern equipment. Only a small fraction of the planned 11 wartime brigade equivalents are adequately equipped at present.

Figuring out what to do to make defense work on a Nordic regional scale is tricky, but essential in order to maintain stability in the region and avoid the frightening prospects which inaction would eventually trigger. One of the conclusions made by Danish defense researchers in their analysis of the Ukraine crisis is worth noting: Military power is the basis for peace in Europe. "Credible deterrence is the key to secure that the Putin regime does not escalate the conflict with the

west to a point, where the west chooses to intervene militarily.”⁸⁶

FUTURE MILITARY-POLITICAL CHALLENGES

If asked how to organize Nordic defense, given the material at hand, a senior soldier from outside the region with a good professional perspective and vision could easily formulate a militarily sensible framework solution. One such template was already provided 20 years ago, when General John J. Sheehan, Commander in Chief U.S. Atlantic Command and NATO’s Supreme Allied Commander, Atlantic, presented his view. Dwindling defense budgets “may force the militaries of separate nations to fight as one, with the army coming from Finland, the air force from Sweden and the Navy from Norway,” he wrote at the time.⁸⁷

For Northern Europe, where the allied nations have made substantial defense cuts since the end of the Cold War, the concept [of Combined Joint Task Forces] holds promise. . . . It is entirely possible that [eventually] you will see a kind of regional approach in the north that will have a CJTF [Combined Joint Task Force] capability.⁸⁸

Sheehan was of the opinion that the prospects for this sort of arrangement were far better in the north than in NATO’s southern areas. Sheehan presented these radical ideas in Norway in spring 1995, but did not find a receptive audience among the senior Norwegian military brass.⁸⁹ All the same, several of Sheehan’s arguments may even be more valid today than 2 decades ago. The diminution of defense budgets that he predicted, at a time when downsizing and restructuring defense forces and cashing in the peace

dividend was only about to begin, has continued unchecked throughout the period. The once formidable Swedish air force no longer stands out as before, but is more or less on par with the three other Nordic air forces. But this is balanced by another significant change: the rise of the Finnish air force to a truly capable regional air force.

Geography, however, is a constant. In a conflict in the Nordic region, Finland's fate is to fight on the ground, alone or with outside help. But as long as Finland lacks binding security guarantees, it is unwilling to take on the responsibilities of others. Finnish State Secretary for Defense Lieutenant General Arto Rätty said in mid-June 2014: "It cannot be, that we would make commitments which relate to NATO's Article Five, i.e., common defense, without ourselves being a NATO member."⁹⁰

SWEDISH AND FINNISH VULNERABILITIES

Within the long-standing Finnish and Swedish defense exchange program, defense researchers were free to explore more far reaching cooperation possibilities "outside the politically mandated box." The first small project started at the Finnish National Defence University in 2010 and resulted in a working paper.⁹¹ The starting point was to identify weaknesses and strengths of the radically different defense concepts of Finland and Sweden and to discover what gains and drawbacks pooling resources together could generate from an operational standpoint. The peacetime readiness of the Finnish defense forces was found to be insufficient and the mobilization process itself vulnerable, especially in the light of developments in Russia toward radically increased surprise attack capabilities.

Deployment of new dual-use precision strike systems like the operational-tactical Iskander ballistic missile and cruise missile systems well within striking distance of Finland was a particular cause for concern.⁹²

Contributing to the Finnish problem is the recognition that a decision to mobilize the army is perhaps the most difficult that the Finnish Supreme Commander and the political leadership would ever have to take. Serious gaming results indicate that timing the decision correctly is most difficult, and the risks are high that it will be taken too late. Needless to say, the game is over if mobilization fails. Successful Finnish mobilization would, however, be a key Nordic interest, and therefore it was deemed necessary to explore how Sweden and perhaps other Nordic countries could give support.

The peacetime readiness of Sweden, however, will be high after the defense reform is concluded. A Swedish battle group could perhaps be available to strengthen the Finnish peacetime readiness in a time of crisis preceding mobilization. The main drawback from the Finnish perspective is that Sweden's own critical needs in a crisis situation, such as the defense of the capital Stockholm and critically important Gotland, and possible other solidarity commitments are likely to rapidly exhaust her resources.

Lack of reserves is a very significant Swedish problem in a drawn-out crisis and that is likely to apply to Norway, too. Finland is the only country in the region that could, at least in theory, deploy trained reserves in prolonged low-tension situations requiring some military presence, for instance in the Arctic area. This could involve mobilization of Finnish reserves on a voluntary basis to assist Nordic neighbors and would evidently require planning, multinational agreements

and probably also domestic legislation. The Finnish strategic reserve is perhaps her most valuable asset in promoting deeper Nordic cooperation aiming at joint performance. Nevertheless, such arrangements have not been discussed yet, even informally.

SITUATION ASSESSMENT AND PRACTICAL PROPOSALS

Historical experiences and an 800-mile long common border with Russia evidently influence Finnish decisionmaking and armed forces profoundly. A thorough knowledge and understanding of Russian military thinking and capabilities are prerequisites for making correct decisions. Continuously updated and detailed classified assessments are naturally among the core tasks of the Finnish defense forces. But some of these assessments are also available in the unclassified domain. A major effort to produce an unclassified report on Russian military developments based on open sources was initiated in 2010 at the Department of Strategic and Defence Studies (DSDS) of the Finnish National Defence University. An interim report in Finnish was published in September 2011, and an updated and expanded report in English in April 2013.⁹³ Similar but broader assessments, entitled *Russian Military Capability in a Ten-Year Perspective*, are regularly published by the FOI.⁹⁴ Most recently, Russian operations in Crimea and Ukraine have given rise to a substantial new wave of analysis assessing to what extent the military performance seen in major Russian exercises translates into actual warfighting capability.⁹⁵

One of the main conclusions in the DSDS report concerning the developing Russian military capability was that capabilities are tailored to meet different demands against various opponents in different

theaters. Swift surprise operations with elite forces from their normal peacetime readiness may work well against unprepared opponents with neglected defense capabilities, but Russia also wants to maintain the capability to mobilize large conventional forces operating in more traditional manners. This is especially relevant when considering the potential for main force operations, and countering the currently fashionable assumption that all future Russian military ventures will resemble actions in Crimea and eastern Ukraine, where the main force has not (to date) been relevant other than as a distraction.

The Russian military's performance has improved significantly since the short war in Georgia in 2008. The unexpected and rapidly executed annexation of Crimea is proof enough. This was followed by the slightly more covert attempt to secure parts of eastern Ukraine, with the apparent aim to destabilize Ukraine entirely. Western defense communities are now attempting to understand the implications of Russia's unorthodox asymmetric way of warfare, in this case using SOF personnel, "volunteers" as well as ethnic Russian separatists, on a more general scale. It is, however, most important not to dismiss the impressive and greatly expanded Russian training and exercise program for conventional forces. A recent example is Russia's counterexercise in the Kaliningrad area June 9-20, 2014, as a response to NATO's BALTOPS '14 and Saber Strike '14 exercises in the Baltic Sea area. The Russian exercise in Kaliningrad Oblast included joint operations involving all three main services, with a total strength on par with the corresponding NATO exercises.

When the Kaliningrad exercise was over, yet another week-long snap combat readiness inspection ex-

ercise immediately commenced in the Central Military District, involving 65,000 troops, 5,500 military vehicles, 180 aircraft, and 60 helicopters.⁹⁶ Subsequently, the Vostok 2014 (East 2014) major strategic command and staff exercise took place in the Eastern Military District in September 2014. It was preceded by another unannounced snap inspection and involved about 100,000 servicemen transported by airlift or rail from various regions, impressive amounts of equipment, and units from different arms of service.⁹⁷ In October 2014, a comprehensive civilian defense exercise was held, involving 300,000 people. Interestingly enough, the Russian air force also participated, as well as the Strategic Rocket Forces, indicating a possible nuclear dimension of this large exercise.⁹⁸ The absence of any similar exercise patterns of this scale in the west—despite Moscow’s claims of NATO and U.S. provocative exercises near Russian borders—gives the Russians great advantages in preparation for waging large-scale war.

The Russian exercises have developed in quality as well as quantity, according to assessments by respected military observers and analysts including in Sweden.⁹⁹ The Russian armed forces are now able to perform increasingly complex joint operations, and all three services appear to have done well. Remarkable improvements have also been achieved in command and control, and the beginning of widespread use of a digital operational-tactical command system has made it possible to conduct operations in a significantly higher tempo. The internal features of the command system, including data and intelligence fusion, contribute to easier and more reliable decisionmaking.

A careful western response is warranted. As the Afghanistan operation winds down, there is reason

to contemplate what is prudent to do. Back to basics is a good starting point. There is a renewed need to develop tactics and operational art suitable for large-scale combat against militarily well organized and equipped opponents. Winter warfare is a specific area where the Nordic states more generally could contribute. Finland, in particular, can contribute not only substantial Arctic warfare experience, but also significant training facilities, as detailed further in the policy recommendations on the succeeding pages.

September and October 2014 saw a range of initiatives and developments as each Nordic state responded in its own way to the new perceived challenge from Russia. Sweden's new fragile minority government under Prime Minister Stefan Löfven stated clearly that Sweden does not intend to apply for NATO membership during this government's term.¹⁰⁰ At the same time, both Löfven and his Minister of Defence Peter Hultqvist further stressed the commitment to Nordic defense cooperation, particularly with Finland. According to Hultqvist, "deepening of defense cooperation between Sweden and Finland is one of the most important projects during the next few years."¹⁰¹ There has even been discussion of the partial reinstatement of conscription in Sweden. But mention of defense cooperation, or even alignment, with the United States is conspicuous by its absence.

Finland, meanwhile, has announced specific measures to enhance readiness in response to updated assessments of the threat from Russia and the entirely new security environment in Europe. Finnish Chief of Defence General Jarmo Lindberg has laid out plans for a Finnish "spearhead force" mirroring NATO's enhanced reaction force, with particular reference to the need to match the newly-demonstrated speed of Rus-

sian decisionmaking.¹⁰² Elsewhere, Lindberg made an explicit statement of the challenge that front-line states now face:

Crisis situations have changed and become more diffuse, without a clear beginning or a clear finish. War is not advertised as such, it begins and ends in its own time. Typical of this period is that the boundaries of peace, crisis and war come together to form a sort of grey area of instability. The line between traditional and unconventional warfare have been wiped out - or rather, they are mixed in a new way with each other by adding new elements of warfare employed. Contemporary warfare, now also known as hybrid warfare, is exactly what this is all about, as events in eastern Ukraine show us.¹⁰³

Finally, in Norway, radical steps have been called for to re-adapt the armed forces back to a defensive capability. As noted earlier, Norwegian defense had over decades changed from a mobilization force of several hundred thousand soldiers, who would be able to repel a full-scale invasion, to a different type of defense effort where small but highly qualified units would deploy in international missions or meet limited attacks on Norway. The result, according to one analysis, is that:

The Army today is so small that it is pointless. The manpower strength is hopelessly small, and there are major shortcomings in core assets such as air defense, artillery and combat vehicles. . . . The Navy is struggling with manning problems, to fill vessels with people, and similarly the Air Force has difficulty obtaining enough technicians for maintenance.¹⁰⁴

Similar analyses highlighted Norway's reliance on adequate warning of threats in order to prepare and retrain to meet them, contrasted with Russia's demonstrated new ability to move large forces rapidly and – importantly – with little visible sign of preparation. In early October 2014, Norwegian Minister of Defense Ine Eriksen Søreide publicly tasked Chief of Defense Admiral Haakon Bruun-Hanssen to provide a military assessment and advice on how to address these new challenges.¹⁰⁵

FUTURE WAR FOR THE NORDIC STATES

Former Norwegian Chief of Defense General Sverre Diesen has presented interesting ideas for further cooperation with the aim of developing functioning defense forces for the future.¹⁰⁶ Diesen notes that the concept of maneuver warfare is still prevailing in most western countries. The aim is to defeat the will and belief of the opponent in his own operation and to seize from him the initiative and capacity to influence the situation. The method to accomplish this is to have faster decisionmaking in the command chain and a higher operational tempo than the opponent. Fully mechanized ground troops with full air support have been the preferred tool.

The first two points are still valid, Diesen says. But tank warfare along the basic principles that the Germans developed 80 years ago will have to yield. The core of future ground forces will consist of small units, which rely on technology and mobility – Intelligence, Surveillance, Target Acquisition and Reconnaissance (ISTAR) units – that engage enemy troop concentrations, military convoys, command posts, and air defense systems. Diesen mentions small ISTAR patrols

with light vehicles or other platforms, but adequately equipped to spot and designate targets and transmit target data to decisionmakers or directly to shooters. Target data can then be distributed for engagement to the most suitable platforms of the services at hand, such as multirole air force platforms or sea-based platforms delivering long-range precision weapons.

In sum, the core of the new system consists of distributed sensors and centralized weapons delivery systems. The maneuvering takes place with these numerous light units, while engagement takes place with stand-off weapons over long distances. Effect on target can be achieved in a small fraction of the time it would take to move mechanized units over such distances. ISTAR patrols need no armored protection, but rather mobility, low signature and ability to disperse. In addition to personal weapons, they also need man-portable air defense systems to handle threats from enemy aircraft and helicopters.

This new concept offers many advantages for countries with small populations but large territories. The number of fighting units remaining in the Nordic countries is so low that it has become impossible to cover all of the territories with traditional forces, or to respond to border infringements within reasonable time frames. The paradigm shift before us is that technology will replace the need to transport heavy units. Fire control tasks will be performed by light and relatively cheaper small units that can be deployed to many critical defensive positions, while a limited number of heavy weapon platforms cover the territory as a whole.

Diesen underlines that it is imperative to understand the potential of information technology and comprehend its impact on organizational and concep-

tual matters. He suggests that Nordic nations should during the coming years explore the possibilities, conduct theoretical studies, move on to gaming and simulations and practical trials, and in the end train and exercise with full-scale troop units to test the concept. We understand Diesen's thinking as related specifically to defense against classical invasion, and his ideas are thought provoking and certainly need to be explored. It should be mentioned, however, that his ideas are not entirely novel. The Finnish doctrine of regional defense and regional combat developed in the 1960s included such elements. Unfortunately, they were forgotten in the 1990s, only to return in the recently adopted new Finnish army doctrine.¹⁰⁷

At the same time, it is evident that more is needed, and it is questionable if this format alone addresses other types of military threats, such as subversion and sabotage activities aimed at paralyzing society even before large scale attacks have begun – along the lines of the Russian asymmetric warfare ideas currently being applied in eastern Ukraine. Vital infrastructure has to be protected and back-up systems built, e.g., for electricity and water supply, in order to increase societal resilience. Local troops, reminiscent of home guard units in the other Nordic countries, play a crucial role. The classical way to defeat SOF detachments holding strategically important positions is firepower. Local forces supported by main battle tanks are still a useful tool even in urban combat.

Another serious question related to Diesen's thinking is how small countries can afford sufficient quantities of stand-off precision weapons if the opponent reverts to his traditional method of fighting, where quantity is a quality of its own. The new Finnish army fighting doctrine can be considered a step in the di-

rection Diesen proposes. The aim is to cause the opponent maximum losses, stop him in his tracks, but holding ground is no longer a key priority. There is, however, an important exception. The Finnish capital in Helsinki and other vital locations are to be defended at all cost, in order to secure political and military leadership and decisionmaking. Although this Finnish approach may in some respects be considered “old-fashioned,” with Finland’s inevitable role as the “front line” of any future Nordic clash with Russia, it will form an essential element of defense of the region as a whole in precisely the same manner as it did in 1939 and 1944.

CONCLUSION

The present prolonged security crisis in Europe, signaled by the war in Georgia in 2008 and then underlined by the armed intervention and land grab in Ukraine, has fatally undermined the European security regime and exposed the vulnerabilities of Russia’s neighbors for all to see.¹⁰⁸ The primary lesson to be drawn from the crisis is that cooperation and solidarity in resisting Russia is essential. Researchers from Denmark’s Center for Military Studies have provided a sober assessment of why Russia continues to keep the initiative: It has not been a western priority to formulate a coherent common policy to control the situation.¹⁰⁹ Because of different national preferences, Russia’s actions have not been met with a resolute response. Paradoxically, countries like France and Germany have had no problems selling high-tech weapon systems to Russia at the same time as they contemplate how to support Kyiv and sanction Russia.

The west has itself created space and freedom of action for Russia. The way out, according to the Danish view, is to close ranks as to thwart Russia's divide and rule policy. It should be recognized that Europe can have influence in security policy only by cooperating closely with the United States. Different European positions will have to be reconciled. Consensus has to be built, e.g., in the form of a new Strategic Concept for NATO. Given the disparate views within Europe and NATO, this is indeed a tall order to achieve.

With Europe divided and reluctant to share burdens, a Nordic regional coalition of the willing, supported by the United States, would be easier to achieve. These countries share both interests and values. Norway is a good example of a NATO member that, despite being a neighbor to Russia, has nevertheless succeeded in maintaining good and relaxed relations to Russia. A Nordic coalition within or outside NATO would be no military threat to Russia, but would severely curtail Russia's possibilities to threaten, coerce, and extort.

Defense cooperation can be discussed by all sides, including the United States, within the *Nordic Security Dialogue*. This would contribute to the security and stability of Europe's North, while remaining a much less politically sensitive approach than attempting the same dialogue within the context of potential NATO membership for Finland and Sweden. Nevertheless, Finland's present position as a nonaligned country is untenable in the long run. As the doyen of Finnish diplomats, Ambassador Jaakko Iloniemi has observed that at present Finland carries the same risks as NATO member states, but without credible assurances of help or the benefit of NATO security guarantees.¹¹⁰

Sweden is in many respects a question mark. On the one hand, Swedish political culture relies heavily on old traditions regardless of which political coalition is in power. This means continuity, predictability, and reluctance to deviate from past behavior. As a result, the gap between the views and assessments of leading politicians and those of the Swedish military community about defense needs is increasing, to the extent that they often seem to live in different worlds.

Swedish former senior defense official and researcher Krister Andrén asks if maintaining a war-preventing threshold capability has become forgotten as a core task of the Swedish defense forces. His logical argument is that the Swedish threshold ambition needs to be sufficiently high, so that there is no gap between threats that are too big for Sweden alone and too small for the Nordic countries as a whole. The Nordic collective threshold capability, in turn, needs to be sufficient that there is no gap between threats that are too big for the Nordic countries combined and too small for the surrounding transatlantic world, i.e., NATO and especially its most important member, the United States.¹¹¹

Nevertheless, the downward trend of Swedish military capability is not likely to change any time soon, and at times Swedish defense policy appears to serve only Swedish defense industrial policy, which limits the potential for cooperation with other Nordic states. For Sweden's neighbors, this is far from reassuring. If policy issues are complicated and difficult to tackle, assessing military capabilities is easier. The results are well known, although not always recognized. Overall, more than one of the defense forces under scrutiny is in a lamentable condition. Any offensively minded great power needs to consider the credibility of its

neighbor's defenses within its own offensive planning. Mathematical methods to evaluate such risks are employed in contingency planning, and one Western starting point is that the probability of success must be greater than roughly 80 percent in order to contemplate even using military means to achieve a desired political goal.¹¹² The Russian army uses its own methods to assess these risks, but, given the harsh austerity measures that have hollowed out the Finnish and Swedish defense forces, it goes without saying that, from a Russian viewpoint, the operational risks of offensive action have diminished sharply.

Leading strategic thinker Professor Thomas C. Schelling gave the following explanation in the 1960s of why credible defense is so profoundly important:

The power to hurt can be counted among the most impressive attributes of military force. . . . The power to hurt is bargaining power. To exploit it is diplomacy – vicious diplomacy, but diplomacy. . . . *it is not the pain and damage itself, but its influence on somebody's behavior that matters.*¹¹³

At present, maintaining the credibility of the defense of the Nordic states depends heavily on finding a way to enhance defense cooperation both within the region, and by extension with the United States.

IMPLICATIONS AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Drawing from historical experiences and current trends, a short list of baseline assessments and recommendations for U.S. policymakers can readily be made:

- The Nordic countries all need support from the United States for their security, and the United States needs reliable allies and partners if it wishes to secure peace and stability in the Nordic and Baltic Sea area, including the Arctic, where competition for natural resources is bound to increase in coming decades.
- Russia's actions have re-established military power as the basis for peace in Europe. It follows that a credible defense posture is essential. But the lack of Nordic military resources to fulfill nationally stated defense tasks in a time of increased uncertainty is commonly acknowledged. As no Nordic country can manage alone, cooperation offers the only sustainable solution. The alternative—inaction—is entirely unsatisfactory for any country in the region. Norway and Denmark would not be reassured, thanks to continued downsizing (including the U.S. rebalancing to Asia) and the alarming potential for a split in NATO. Sweden has already explicitly rejected territorial defense as a policy for the foreseeable future, and Finland, despite recent increased willingness to publicly state the threat, remains exposed and unable to manage alone.
- The time-consuming task of creating common military capabilities should be pursued vigorously within the region in parallel with political efforts to align goals and objectives and improve cooperation. Informed encouragement from the United States, with clear communication of the extent and limits of U.S. support, can help foster this aim.
- The "NORDEFCO" and "Joint Procurement" sections highlight areas where the national pol-

icies and interests of individual Nordic states have so far limited the effectiveness of cooperation programs. Nevertheless, any enhancement of defense cooperation in any area complicates the operational calculations of the potential adversary. It follows that all opportunities to work together should be pursued at the earliest stage possible given political constraints. This applies in particular to building common ground among leadership figures, including sharing of situational awareness, assessments and interpretations, the consequences of action, and especially the consequences of inaction.

- The long-term goal for the Nordic countries must be the ability to fight as one entity in cooperation with the United States and NATO. Meanwhile, a way should be found to allow a politically acceptable coalition of the willing between the United States and the Nordic countries to underwrite regional security.
- But antagonizing Russia by singling out NATO membership and endorsing it to Finland and Sweden as the only possible path to achieve Nordic security guarantees is at present bad policy, given the political sensitivity of NATO accession. More subtle policies, which could use the *Nordic Security Dialogue* with the United States as a forum for discussion and planning, can work toward the same future goal without precluding NATO membership in the future. The long Norwegian experience of dealing with Russia in a relaxed and nonadversarial manner is a valuable asset in this respect.
- Similarly, extensive analytical expertise on Russia throughout the Nordic states can be lever-

aged to enhance U.S. understanding of Russian intentions and capabilities. As noted by a UK parliamentary committee in July 2014, Russia's neighbors have a powerful incentive to properly resource study and analysis in this area, and these resources can be tapped into by the U.S. Department of State and Department of Defense (DoD) among others, given an appropriate framework for enhanced cooperation.¹¹⁴

- There is an acknowledged need for armed forces within NATO and partner nations to change focus from insurgency-related operations back to more classic forms of state-on-state warfare. Land warfare tactics and operational art against modern but more traditional large-scale troop formations need to be developed and trained in Nordic environments and on sufficiently large manpower scales. Winter and Arctic warfare are fields where Finland and the Nordic states more generally can contribute significant expertise and training resources for the benefit of U.S. and allied forces. In particular, Finland would be able to complement and cooperate with NATO's Cold Weather Operations (CWO) Center of Excellence (COE) in Bodø, Norway. The ranges at Sodankylä in northern Finland have ample facilities for training and exercising defensive warfare together in at least battalion size formations, including support from air assets, with the Rovajärvi live-firing range and others nearby. This is a significant asset as similar ranges are in short supply elsewhere, especially in Western Europe. Finnish senior officers unofficially advocate an additional COE based on the Sodankylä assets, and focus-

ing on Arctic land warfare in close coordination with CWO COE.

- It is important to bear in mind that the Norwegian-Russian border, although geographically short, is strategically of profound importance for Russia; the vastly longer Finnish-Russian border does not carry the same relative strategic weight. This adds to the importance of the Arctic as an area of strategic focus.
- Finland is the only country in the region that could, at least in theory, mobilize and deploy trained reserves for prolonged low-tension situations. The U.S. Army should consider options for cooperation with the Finnish military for situations of this kind, requiring a military presence to maintain security in the Arctic and potentially other regions.
- Enhanced cooperation with both Finland and Sweden would self-evidently play a major role in security assurance for the Baltic States, drastically reducing their current isolation in the face of Russian intimidation. Both states are notably less resistant to defense burden sharing than many established NATO allies in Western Europe.
- U.S. policymakers should be alert to shifts in the domestic debates on NATO membership in Sweden and Finland. In the case of Finland in particular, already close integration with NATO structures and compliance with membership criteria would facilitate a potentially rapid accession process. This would imply a sharp increase in potential for military and security cooperation with the United States, and preparation for this eventuality by the U.S. Army and DoD would be prudent.

ENDNOTES

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